

100 COMMON ERRORS IN ENGLISH

Dear student,

Are you ready to improve your English? ☺ This book will help you!

This is a collection of common vocabulary and grammar errors in spoken English, made by English as a Second Language learners. If you know the main errors, it's easier to avoid them.

Some of the errors are worse than others – there are some that completely change the meaning of the sentence, and others that are not exactly “wrong,” but there is a better way to say it.

I hope you find this book useful, but I want to give you one piece of advice: **Don't let the fear of making mistakes stop you from speaking English.** Making mistakes is part of the learning process, and it's better to speak and communicate (even with small mistakes) than to keep quiet and never say anything!

If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, e-mail me at help@espressoenglish.net

Good luck in your studies!

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100 Common Errors in English

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#1 – Said / Told

Don't say: "She said me that she was happy."

Say: "She told me that she was happy."

Or: "She said that she was happy."

Tell means "to give information **to a person**" – so **tell** (present) and **told** (past) are always followed by a person: me, you, him, her, us, them, John, Jane, the teacher, etc.

With **say** (present) or **said** (past), we can use these structures:

1. **say (something)**
Francis **says** she doesn't like chocolate.
2. **say that (something)**
I said that the new website design was great.
3. **say (something) to (a person)**
What did the teacher **say to you** when you failed the test?
4. **"(something)" a person said**
"Nice to meet you," Harry **said**.

Just remember – you **say something**, and you **tell someone something**!

#2 – Irregular Plurals

Don't say: "I have three childrens."

Say: "I have three children."

Or: "I have three kids."

The plural of "child" is "children" – because the word "children" is already plural, we don't add "s." Another possibility is to say "kids," which is an alternative word for "children." Here are some more nouns with irregular plurals:

- person / people
- man / men
- woman / women
- foot / feet
- tooth / teeth
- mouse / mice
- fish / fish
- crisis / crises
- nucleus / nuclei

#3 – Years Old

Don't say: “My daughter has eight years.”

Don't say: “My daughter has eight years old.”

Say: “My daughter is eight years old.”

When speaking about age in English, we use the verb **be** (am, is, are) and not have/has.

- I'm thirty years old.
- My nephew is fourteen years old.
- These houses are 200 years old.

We can also say **am / are / is** + age without “years old”:

- I'm thirty.
- My nephew is fourteen.
- My kids are six and eight.

When it is somebody's birthday, we say they **turn** age :

- We threw a big party when my mother turned fifty.
- My husband's turning forty next month.
- My youngest cousin just turned three.

#4 – Marriage / Wedding

Don't say: "I'm going to my best friend's marriage on Sunday."

Say: "I'm going to my best friend's wedding on Sunday."

Wedding = The ceremony

- I'm going to my cousin's **wedding** on October 7.
- We want to have a band at our **wedding** reception.
- The **wedding** will be at the church, and the reception will be at a restaurant.

Marriage = The relationship in general, or the institution in society

- My parents have a strong **marriage**. They've been together for 35 years.
- New York has just legalized gay **marriage**.
- Over 40% of **marriages** end in divorce.

Married = Describes the status of a person

- My sister isn't **married**. She's single.
- I've been **married** for 5 years.

Get married = The action of going from single to married

- We're **getting married** in July.
- My teacher **got married** last year.

#5 – Need / Have to

Don't say: "I need study more."

Say: "I need to study more."

Or: "I have to study more."

When the word **need** is followed by a verb, we say **need to** (or **have to**). When the word **need** is followed by a noun, we don't use "to":

- I need a book.
- I need to go to the library.

#6 – Meet / Know

Don't say: "I knew him last year."

Say: "I met him last year."

Meet has two meanings:

- When you have first contact with a person ("I met him last year")
- When you will encounter someone you already know. In this case, we often use "meet with" or "meet up with" ("I'm meeting up with some friends at the bar after work.")

Know has two different meanings/uses:

- With knowledge and skills in general ("He knows everything about computers.")
- With knowing people in general ("Do you know Janet? She's in the advanced English class." – "No, I don't think I know her.")

#7 – Explain

Don't say: "Can you explain me the problem?"

Say: "Can you explain the problem to me?"

Explain is like "say/said" – we **explain something** to someone. We can also say "explain that" – "The agent explained that our flight had been delayed 30 minutes because of the storm."

#8 – Recommend / Suggest

Don't say: "I recommend you to get more exercise."

Say: "I recommend that you get more exercise."

Or: "You should get more exercise."

Recommend and **suggest** are followed by **that** or by the **–ing form**. Don't use **"to"**! Examples:

- I suggested that he see a doctor.
- I suggested seeing a doctor.
- I suggested him to see a doctor.

#9 – Ask / Ask for / Ask about Ask (someone) to

Don't say: "I asked to my boss..."

Say: "I asked my boss..."

Never use a preposition between **"ask"** and the person you are asking.

When you want an **object**, you can use **ask for + object**:

- I **asked for** a hamburger.
- I **asked** my boss **for** a raise.

When you want **general information**, you can use **ask about**:

- I **asked about** her family.
- She **asked** me **about** my job.

When you want **specific information**, you can use **ask + (question word)**:

- I **asked how much** the camera cost.

- Let's **ask what time** the theater opens.
- One moment – I'm on the phone **asking** my brother **where** we can park the car.

When you want **somebody to do something**, you can use **ask (someone) to**:

- I **asked him to** turn off the lights.
- Martha **asked me not to** use her computer.
- We're going to **ask the teacher to** help us.

#10 – Pass the time / Spend time

Don't say: "I pass a lot of time reading."

Say: "I spend a lot of time reading."

Use "**spend time**" to talk about the time you do an activity. The expression **pass the time** is different – it means doing something to make the time pass faster while you are waiting for something else, for example, "I look at the magazines to pass the time while waiting for my appointment at the dentist's office."

#11 – Lose / Miss

Don't say: "I lost my flight."

Say: "I missed my flight."

Use **lose** with objects – "Oh no! I lost my keys!" or with sports games – "My favorite soccer team lost 3-0 in the semifinal." Use **miss** with transportation (flights, trains, buses) or with events and opportunities – "You missed a great English class yesterday!"

We also use **miss** to talk about feeling sad when we don't see someone – "My brother moved to Australia last year. I really miss him!"

#12 – Look / Look at Look for / Look up

Don't say: "Look this picture."

Say: "Look at this picture."

Look at – Direct attention to something

Look for – Try to find something that is lost: "I'm looking for my glasses. Do you know where they are?"

Look up – Try to find information: "I always look up new words in the dictionary."

Look up to (someone) – Admire a person for their good character. "I really look up to my father – I hope to be as kind and generous as he is."

Look down on (someone) – Consider a person to be inferior. "My boss is so arrogant. She looks down on everybody and treats us like we don't know anything."

Look after – Take care of. "I'm looking after my neighbor's dogs while she's on vacation."

Look into – Investigate. "The police are looking into the case."

Look forward to – Be happy about something that will happen in the future. "I'm really looking forward to our family trip to the mountains. It's going to be so relaxing!"

Look over – Review, evaluate, check for errors. "Can you look over my report and make some suggestions on how to improve it?"

Look out! – Be careful! "Look out! That pan is going to fall off the stove."

#13 – History / Story

Don't say: "He told me a funny history about his dog."

Say: "He told me a funny story about his dog."

History refers to everything that has happened in the past, especially in the political, economical, and social areas. **History** is always based in truth and facts. A **story** may be truth or fiction; it is the description of an event or series of events that is usually told to teach or entertain.

#14 – For / To

Don't say: "I'm studying every day for improve my English."

Say: "I'm studying every day to improve my English."

The words **to** and **for** are very easy to confuse! Here are some rules:

Use **to** in these cases:

1. **Destination** (*We're going to Paris.*)
2. **What time it is** (*It's a quarter to 2.*)
3. **Distance** (*It's about ten miles from my house to the university.*)
4. **Comparing** (*I prefer sleeping to working.*)
5. **Giving** (*I gave the book to my sister.*)
6. **Motive/Reason – with verb** (*I came here to see you.*)

Use **for** in these cases:

1. **Benefits** (*Yogurt is good for your digestion.*)
2. **Period of time** (*We've lived here for 2 years.*)
3. **Schedule** (*I made an appointment for May 3.*)
4. **Agree with** (*Are you for or against the development of nuclear weapons?*)
5. **Doing something to help someone** (*Could you carry these books for me?*)
6. **Motive/Reason – with noun** (*Let's go out for a drink.*)

As you can see in #6, **to** or **for** can be used for a motive/reason, but **to** is always with a verb, and **for** is always with a noun. Here's a good example:

- I came to New York **to work**.
- I came to New York **for a new job**.

#15 – Like

Don't say: "I like very much this book."

Say: "I like this book very much." (formal)

Or: "I like this book a lot."

Or: "I really like this book."

"Very much" is an adverb that describes "like." In English, we usually put adverbs either **before the verb** or **at the end of the sentence**. Look at these examples:

- ~~The new product reached **easily** 1 million sales.~~
- The new product reached 1 million sales **easily**.
- The new product **easily** reached 1 million sales.

#16 – Information

Don't say: "I'd like some informations about..."

Say: "I'd like some information about..."

English nouns are either **countable** or **uncountable**.

Countable nouns are things we can count – for example, cats:

- My brother has **a cat**.
- My sister has **two cats**.
- My friend has **three cats**.

Other examples of countable nouns:

- **Things** - book, table, computer, banana, shirt, television, pen, house.
- **People** - man, woman, child, friend, brother, sister, uncle, teacher, boss.

Uncountable nouns are words that we can't count, or can't divide into separate parts:

- **Ideas and concepts** - love, fun, sadness, work, money, peace, safety
- **Information** - advice, information, news, knowledge
- **Categories** - music, furniture, equipment, jewelry, literature, meat
- **Liquids and foods that can't be counted** - water, butter, rice, flour, milk

We NEVER add “-s” to uncountable nouns!

#17 – Agree

Don't say: “I'm agree with you.”

Say: “I agree with you.”

We can say “**I agree with you**” or “**I'm in agreement with you**” (more formal).

We can also say “**agree to**” do the action resulting from the agreement:

- Michael **agreed to help** me with my homework after class.
- My neighbor and I **agreed not to play** loud music after 10 PM.

#18 – Thinking

Don't say: “I'm thinking to buy a car.”

Say: “I'm thinking of buying a car.”

Or: “I'm thinking about buying a car.”

Think is often followed by **of** or **about**, but never **to**. Also, the correct form of the verb is the **-ing** form.

#19 – Travel / Trip / Journey

Don't say: "How was your travel?"

Say: "How was your trip?"

Trip is a noun and **travel** is a verb.

A **trip (n.)** is one specific act of going to another place (often for a short time) and returning.

- We took a five-day **trip** to the Amazon.
- You're back from vacation! How was your **trip**?
- I went on business **trips** to Switzerland and Germany last month.

Use the verbs "take" and "go on" with **trip**.

Travel (v.) is going to another place (in general).

- I really like to **travel**.
- He **travels** frequently for work.
- My sister is currently **travelling** through South America.

Travel can be used as a noun to describe the act of travelling in general:

- **Travel** in that region of the country is dangerous.
- World **travel** gives you a new perspective.

A **journey (n.)** is one piece of travel (going from one place to another) – usually a long distance.

- The **journey** takes 3 hours by plane or 28 hours by bus.
- He made the 200-mile **journey** by bike.
- "A **journey** of a thousand miles must begin with a single step" - Lao-tze, *Tao Te Ching*

We can also use **journey** in a more "metaphorical" way to talk about progress in life:

- He's overcome a lot of problems on his spiritual **journey**.
- My uncle is an alcoholic, but he's beginning the **journey** to sobriety.

#20 – The

Don't say: “In the Russia...”

Say: “In Russia...”

Never use “**the**” with names of countries, states, or cities.

Exceptions: the United States, the Philippines, the Soviet Union, the Roman Empire

You can use “the” with regions:

- I'm from **the northeast**.
- We're going to **the south of Argentina**.

#21 – Actually / Currently

Don't say: “Actually, I work at the university.”

Say: “Currently, I work at the university.”

Currently means “now, at the present moment.”

Actually means “in reality,” and it is often used to make corrections:

- “You're from Brazil so you speak Spanish, right?”
“Actually, Portuguese is spoken in Brazil.”

#22 – Remember / Remind

Don't say: “Could you remember me the date of the test?”

Say: “Could you remind me when the test is?”

Remember is when you think of a memory (a past experience):

- I **remember** the first time I ever swam in the ocean, when I was 5 years old.
- Do you **remember** the great Italian restaurant we ate at in New York?
- I don't think he **remembers** that we met 30 years ago.

Remember is also the opposite of "forget." You can use **remember** to talk about keeping something in your mind:

- Please **remember** to wash the dishes after you finish eating lunch.
- I was already at work when I suddenly **remembered** I had a dentist appointment at 9:30. I called the dentist and rescheduled it for the next day.
- I can't **remember** her name. Is it Alice or Annie?

Remind is when a person or thing makes you think about something.

- My mother **reminded me** to wash the dishes after I finished eating lunch.
- The secretary **reminded Mr. Greene** that he had a meeting at 4:30.
- Josh uses the calendar on his cell phone to **remind him** about important dates.
- Our shopping list **reminds us** what we need to buy at the supermarket.

#23 – Since / For

Don't say: "I've worked here since three years."

Say: "I've worked here for three years."

Or: "I've been working here for three years."

Use "**for**" with periods of time:

- **For** – three years, two weeks, four days, five hours, ten minutes, decades, centuries

Use "**since**" with a definite point in time:

- **Since** – 1973, last June, Monday, I was a child, I graduated from college, my last birthday

In this case, we can use either the **present perfect simple** (I've worked) or the **present perfect continuous** (I've been working) – there is no difference in meaning with this sentence.

#24 – A / An / One

Don't say: "I took one pen and started to write."

Say: "I took a pen and started to write."

Use **one** when the number is important; when you want to emphasize that it is one (not two or three or more):

- **One** of these eggs is rotten, but the others are OK.
- I wanted to buy three CDs, but I didn't have enough money, so I bought only **one**.

In all other cases, when the fact of being "one" is not important, use **a / an**:

- I had **an** omelet for breakfast.
- I bought **a** new CD yesterday.

#25 – 's

Don't say: "I went to the house of my friend."

Don't say: "I went to my friend house."

Say: "I went to my friend's house."

In English, we normally use **'s** and not **of** for possessives:

- my sister's dog
- the teacher's car
- Paul's wife's dress

When the word already ends in **-s**, just add **'** (the pronunciation is the same):

- Jesus' words
- our boss' office
- my kids' toys

#26 – Despite / In spite of

Don't say: “Despite of the problems, we finished the project on time.”

Don't say: “Despite there were problems, we finished the project on time.”

Say: “Despite the problems, we finished the project on time.”

Or: “In spite of the problems, we finished the project on time”

Or: “Despite having problems, we finished the project on time.”

Despite and **in spite of** are the same – but “despite of” doesn't exist!

After **despite** or **in spite of**, you can use a **noun** or the **-ing form** of a verb:

#27 – Better / Worse/ More / Much

Don't say: “My new computer is more better than my old one.”

Say: “My new computer is better than my old one.”

Or: “My new computer is much better than my old one.”

The rules for comparatives:

- **1 syllable:** fast → faster
- **Words ending in Y:** easy → easier

- **2+ syllables:** popular → more popular
- **IRREGULAR:** good → better
- **IRREGULAR:** bad → worse

“Better” is already comparative, so it is not necessary to add “more.”

If you want to say that the computer is A LOT better, you can say “much better.” Here’s another example:

Candy - \$2.00 / Ice cream - \$2.25 / Chocolate cake - \$20.00

- The ice cream is **a little more expensive** than the candy.
(or “slightly more expensive,” or “a bit more expensive”)
- The chocolate cake is **much more expensive** than the candy.
(or “a lot more expensive,” “far more expensive,” or “way more expensive” – informal)

#28 – Wait / Hope / Expect

Don’t say: “I’m waiting my friend to call.”

Say: “I’m waiting for my friend to call.”

Wait = Pass the time until something happens

- It’s 6:45. I’m **waiting** for the 7:00 bus.
- We **waited** in line for three hours to get tickets to the concert.
- You need to **wait** for the computer to finish updating.

Don’t confuse “wait” with **hope** and **expect**:

Hope = Want something to happen

- I **hope** I’ll get a promotion this year!
- I’m sorry to hear you’re sick. I **hope** you get better soon!
- The traffic is very bad today. I **hope** I won’t be late.

Expect = Believe that something probably will happen

#29 – Difficult / Difficulty

Don't say: “I have difficulty to wake up early.”

Say: “It's difficult for me to wake up early.”

Or: “It's hard for me to wake up early.”
(more informal, more common)

In spoken English, the word **hard** is frequently used instead of “difficult.”

The phrase “I have difficulty” can be used before a **noun**, and the phrase “It's difficult” or “It's hard” is used before a **verb**:

- I have difficulty with grammar. / I have a hard time with grammar.
(grammar = noun)
- It's difficult for me to understand English. / It's hard for me to understand English.
(remember = verb)

#30 – Fun / Funny

Don't say: “I like playing basketball. It's funny.”

Say: “I like playing basketball. It's fun.”

Many students confuse the words **fun** and **funny**.

Fun = Enjoyable

- English class is fun!
- I think playing basketball is more fun than playing soccer.
- We had fun at the party.

Funny = It makes you laugh, hahahaha

- The movie is really funny.

- I heard a funny story yesterday.
- I love comedy, it's so funny.

#31 – Want / Hope

Don't say: “She wants that I call her back.”

Say: “She wants me to call her back.”

After **want** and **would like**, we normally don't use “that.”

It's possible to use “that” after **hope** or **wish**, but it's not necessary:

- I hope that you feel better soon.
I hope you feel better soon.
- I wish that I hadn't gotten so angry.
I wish I hadn't gotten so angry.

After **want** and **would like**, we can use a **noun**, or a **person + to + verb**:

- I'd like a **drink**.
I'd like **you to get** me a drink.
- Dan wants **some money**.
Dan wants **me to lend** him some money.

#32 – Without / After / Before

Don't say: “They left without say goodbye.”

Say: “They left without saying goodbye.”

After **without**, **after**, and **before**, use the **-ing** form of the verb.

- Please turn off the lights **before leaving**.
- My life changed **after having** kids.

In the case of **after** and **before**, we can also use **subject + verb**:

- Please turn off the lights **before you leave**.
- My life changed **after I had kids**.

#33 – Nothing / Anything

Don't say: "I didn't buy nothing at the store."

Say: "I didn't buy anything at the store."

In English, we can't have a "**double negative**" in the sentence. Use **any-** instead:

- I don't know anyone at this party.
- We aren't doing anything at the moment.
- They didn't travel anywhere during their vacation.
- You shouldn't buy any of those shoes – they're overpriced.
- The teacher hasn't given any homework so far this week.
- Don't worry, he won't tell anybody your secret.

We also use **any-** in questions:

- Do you know anyone at this party?
- Are you doing anything at the moment?
- Did they travel anywhere during their vacation?
- Should I buy any of these shoes?
- Has the teacher given any homework this week?
- Will he tell anybody my secret?

#34 – Interested / Interesting

Don't say: "I'm interesting in adopt an animal."

Say: "I'm interested in adopting an animal."

There are two errors in this sentence. The first one is the difference between **interesting** and **interested**. In general, with adjectives that have both –ing and –ed forms, use the –ed form to describe **how you feel** and the –ing form to describe **the thing/person/event that causes the feeling**:

- I'm bored. This movie is boring.

Here are other pairs of adjectives that follow this pattern:

- I'm tired. My job is very tiring.
- I'm excited! This soccer game is really exciting!
- I'm frustrated. The problems in my life are so frustrating.
- I'm surprised. This situation is quite surprising.
- I'm confused. The book I'm reading is confusing.

#35 – It

Don't say: "Was obvious that something was wrong."

Say: "It was obvious that something was wrong."

All sentences in English need a subject (I, you, he, she, we, they, or it) – and many students forget the subject **it**. Here are more examples of common sentences with **it**:

- It's raining.
- "How was your interview?"
"It was great!"
- It's not easy to work full-time while in school.
- "Do you want to buy this cell phone?"
"I'm not sure. Can it access the internet?"
- I like your necklace. Is it real gold?
- According to the weather forecast, it'll be sunny and hot tomorrow.

#36 – Fabric / Factory

Don't say: “The company has 10 fabrics in 5 countries.”

Say: “The company has 10 factories in 5 countries.”

Fabric is a type of material used to make clothes, sheets, blankets, etc.

A **factory** is a place that manufactures products.

#37 – Rob / Steal / Thief

Don't say: “My cell phone was robbed.”

Say: “My cell phone was stolen.”

Robber or Thief (n.) = the person

- The **robbers** ran away from the police.
- The **thief** took my laptop and cell phone.
- “Give me all your money!” the **robber** said.
- The **thieves** were tall, white men who looked about 22 years old. One had brown hair and the other was blonde.

Robbery (n.) = the event

- Police are investigating the **robbery** of the Main Street Bank.
- The **robbery** occurred at 4:30 PM.
- Three employees were injured during the **armed robbery**.
(an “armed robbery” means there were weapons – guns or knives)

Theft (n.) = the event or the crime (in the justice system)

- He was sentenced to eight years in prison for the **theft** of a motorcycle.
- We immediately reported the **theft** to the police.
- Ken was accused of identity **theft**.

Rob (v.) = the action

Often used in the past as **robbed**:

- Donald **robbed** a total of five supermarkets before being caught by the police.
- My favorite pizza shop was **robbed** last month. Luckily, no one was hurt.
- I was **robbed** at gunpoint while walking home from work.

Steal / Stolen (v.) = the action of taking something specific

Steal is always used together with an object – the object that was taken.

- The thief **stole** a gold necklace from the woman's bedroom.
- Wendy's wallet was **stolen** on the subway.
- Jim was caught **stealing** money from his own company.
- Rachel tried to **steal** Carla's boyfriend.

To describe a thief entering a house or apartment, we can also use the phrasal verb **break into**:

- "My house was broken into last month."
"Oh, really? Was anything stolen?"
"Yes, they took my DVD player and my laptop."

#38 – All / Whole / Every

Don't say: "I invited all the class."

Say: "I invited the entire class." (more formal)

Or: "I invited the whole class." (more informal)

Use **every** with singular, countable nouns:

- I exercise **every day**.
- **Every student** in the class has a computer.
- **Every necklace** in this store costs more than \$1,000.

Use **all** with plural countable nouns OR with uncountable nouns to mean 100% of many things:

- **All of this equipment** is new.
= many pieces of equipment
- **All the students** in the class have computers.
- **All the necklaces** in this store are expensive.

Use **whole** or **entire** with uncountable or singular countable nouns to mean 100% of one thing:

- I ate the whole pizza.
= 100% of one pizza.
- I finished reading the entire book in three days.
= 100% of one book.

Here are more examples that show the difference between **all** and **whole**:

- I ate the whole cake.
= 100% of one cake.
- I ate all the cakes.
= 100% of many cakes
- The whole apple is rotten.
= 100% of one apple.
- All the fruit is rotten.
= 100% of many apples, bananas, grapes, etc.

#39 – Politics / Policy

Don't say: "The company adopted a new politic."

Say: "The company adopted a new policy."

Policy refers to rules, guidelines, and standards for behavior. **Politics** refers to government.

#40 – Before / Ago / Back

Don't say: “I sent the letter two months before.”

Say: “I sent the letter two months ago.”

Or: “I sent the letter two months back.” (informal)

Ago and **back** are used for past times from the present moment.

Before is used for past times from another time in the past. Here are some examples of **before**:

- Yesterday I missed my train. I got to the train station at 7:10, but the train had left ten minutes before.
- I was very happy when I got this job last year, because I had lost my previous job six months before.

#41 – So / Such

Don't say: “I have so wonderful friends.”

Say: “I have such wonderful friends.”

Or: “My friends are so wonderful.”

The rule here is simple: after “so,” use an adjective. After “such,” use the adjective + the object/person described. Compare:

- Their dog is **so** cute.
- They have **such a** cute dog.
- Her kids are **so** obedient.
- She has **such** obedient kids.

#42 – The

Don't say: “The love is beautiful.”

Say: “Love is beautiful.”

Don't use **the** before general ideas or concepts like happiness, love, respect, or fun. You can only use “the” with these words if talking about a specific case or example:

- **Love** is beautiful.
(love in general)
- **The love** between Romeo and Juliet is beautiful.
(the specific love between Romeo and Juliet)
- **Respect** for customers is essential.
(respect in general)
- **The respect** my son has for his father is impressive.
(one specific case of respect)
- Everybody is looking for **happiness**.
(happiness in general)
- Nothing compares to **the happiness** I feel when I help others.
(one specific example of happiness)
- I'm trying to lose **weight**.
(weight in general)
- I'm trying to lose **the weight** I gained during my vacation.
(specific weight)

#43 – Both / Either / Neither

Don't say: “I speak neither French or German.”

Or: “I speak neither French nor German.”

Both... and is used for two things:

- I speak **both** English **and** Spanish.

Either... or is used for one thing, but not the other.

- You can choose one flavor of ice cream - **either** chocolate **or** vanilla.

Neither... nor is used for **not** two things. (You can't use "neither... or" – it's incorrect.)

- I don't like soccer. I don't like tennis. I like **neither** soccer **nor** tennis.

#44 – Borrow / Lend

Don't say: "Could you borrow me a pencil?"

Say: "Could you lend me a pencil?"

Or: "Could I borrow a pencil?"

Borrow is to receive something temporarily.

Lend is to give something temporarily.

Imagine the bank gives you \$10,000, you will need to pay the money back to the bank later.

- The bank **lent** me \$10,000.
- I **borrowed** \$10,000 from the bank.

Lend is often used with **to**:

- Maria **lent** her dictionary **to** Daniel.

Borrow is often used with **from**:

- Daniel **borrowed** a dictionary **from** Maria.

#45 – Enough

Don't say: "This box isn't enough big for all the books."

Say: “This box isn’t big enough for all the books.”

Don’t say: “We don’t have people enough for a soccer team.”

Say: “We don’t have enough people for a soccer team.”

Enough goes **after** adjectives, adverbs, and verbs. Enough goes **before** nouns.

Adjective + enough:

- Are you **old enough** to see this movie?

Adverb + enough:

- You sing **well enough** to be a professional!

Verb + enough:

- I play the piano, but I don’t **practice enough**.

Enough + noun:

- There aren’t **enough chairs** for everybody to sit down.
- I don’t have **enough information** to make a decision.
- Do you have **enough money** to buy that motorcycle?

#46 – Listen / Hear

Don’t say: “I listened a great new song on the radio.”

Say: “I heard a great new on the radio.”

There are two differences between **listen** and **hear**:

Listen is often a prolonged action, but **hear** is just one moment in time:

- While I was **listening** to the news, I **heard** that there was a plane crash outside the city.
(“listening to news” = continuous action, “heard that” = one specific moment)

Listen is often intentional, but **hear** is often unintentional.

- After I **heard** a loud noise downstairs, I **listened** carefully to see if a robber had entered the house. (“heard a loud noise” = without trying; “listened carefully” = trying)

Listen is always followed by **to**:

- I’m **listening to a podcast**.
- I can’t **hear the TV**. Turn the volume up.

#47 – See / Watch / Look

Don’t say: “I can’t look anything. It’s too dark.”

Say: “I can’t see anything. It’s too dark.”

Look, see, and watch are all actions you do with your eyes, but there are small differences:

Look is to direct your attention towards something. “Look” is intentional, and it is often used in this form: **look + at + (object)**:

- **Look at** the sunset – it’s so beautiful!

See is to perceive with your eyes, but it is not intentional (you don’t “try” to see, it just happens):

- I **saw** a car accident while driving home from work.

Watch is to keep your eyes on something (usually something that is moving) for a long time. It is intentional.

- I’m **watching** TV.
- I **watched** the baseball game.

#48 – Sell / Sale

Don’t say: “There’s a big sell at my favorite store.”

Say: “There’s a big sale at my favorite store.”

Sell is a verb and **sale** is a noun:

- I'm going to **sell** my car and buy a new one.
- She's **selling** bottles of water at the football game.
- Yesterday I **sold** all of my old college textbooks on the internet.
- The bookstore is having a Christmas **sale** - everything is 20% off. (=20% discount)
- The **sales** of our new product are slowly increasing.
- This watch is normally \$100, but it's on **sale** for \$70.

#49 – Only / Alone / Lonely

Don't say: "My parents and brother have gone out, so I'm home only."

Say: "My parents and brother have gone out, so I'm home alone."

Alone means "by yourself" – there is nobody else around you.

Only means "just one" and can be used with people, objects, or actions:

- Dana was the **only** one who understood today's English lesson.
- I have **only** one pair of sunglasses.
- I didn't have a lot of money, so I **only** bought one T-shirt.

Lonely means "by yourself and feeling sad and isolated" – it is a negative emotion.

- I was **lonely** on my first day of class because I didn't have any friends.

#50 – Ever / Never

Don't say: "I've ever been to Japan."

Say: "I've been to Japan." (positive)

Ever is used only in present perfect **questions**, to ask if a person has done something at any time in their life:

- Have you **ever** eaten Thai food?
Yes, I have. / No, I haven't.
- Have your parents **ever** taken singing lessons?
Yes, they have. / No, they haven't.
- Has Bill **ever** studied abroad?
Yes, he has. / No, he hasn't.

In present perfect **statements**, don't use "ever":

- I've worked for three different companies in my life.
- We've been to London twice.
- She's taken a few private English classes.

You can use **never** in **statements**:

- I've never liked math.
- They've never owned a car.
- My best friend's never been married.

#51 – Enjoy / Like / Love

Don't say: "I enjoy to travel."

Say: "I enjoy travelling."

Like and **love** can be followed by **-ing** or by **to**:

- I like swimming = I like to swim
- She loves reading = She loves to read

However, **enjoy** can only be followed by the **-ing form**.

- Present: We enjoy taking long walks on the beach.
- Past: I enjoyed talking to you the other day.
- Future: I'll enjoy having some time to relax when I go on vacation next month.

#52 – Everybody

Don't say: “Everybody have problems.”

Say: “Everybody has problems.”

The words **everybody**, **anybody**, **somebody**, and **nobody** all take the **singular form** of the verb!

- “I don't know if anybody **is** in the office right now.”
- “How do you react if someone **gives** you a compliment?”
- “Nobody **likes** the new English teacher.”

In general, words that refer to **groups of people** (club, class, army, family, team, government) are considered **singular**, because the group is “one thing.”

- “My family **is** visiting me for the holidays.”
- “The basketball team **has** a new coach.”

The one exception is **police**, which takes the **plural form**:

- “The police **are** investigating the murder.”
- “Police **have** arrested three suspects.”

To talk about an individual member of the police, we can say **policeman** or **policewoman** - or the gender-neutral term **police officer**.

#53 – Accustomed

Don't say: “I'm accustomed with cold weather.”

Say: “I'm accustomed to cold weather.”

Or: “I'm used to cold weather.”

The preposition that follows **accustomed** is **to**, not “with.” It’s also very common to say “I’m used to...” or “I’m not used to...” (in this case, the “s” in “used” is pronounced with a soft “s,” not like “z”).

#54 – Do / Does / Auxiliary Verbs

Don’t say: “What means this word?”

Say: “What does this word mean?”

It’s very common for English learners to forget the auxiliary verb in questions. Almost any question in English can be formed using the QUASM structure:

Question word – “What”

Auxiliary verb – “Does”

Subject – “This word”

Main verb – “Mean?”

Here’s another example: “Where are you going?”

Question word – “Where”

Auxiliary verb – “Are”

Subject – “You”

Main verb – “Going?”

Click here for examples of many more questions in QUASM form:

<http://www.espressoenglish.net/an-easy-way-to-form-almost-any-question-in-english/>

#55 – Questions – Word Order

Don’t say: “Where I can find a bank?”

Say: “Where can I find a bank?”

In questions with “can,” remember that “can” is the auxiliary verb and comes **before the subject**:

- **Can you** speak English?
- How **can we** solve this problem?
- When **can they** finish the work?
- How many languages **can he** speak?

#56 – Leave

Don't say: “We need to leave to the airport.”

Say: “We need to leave for the airport.”

In English, we **leave for** a place and **arrive from** a place:

- I'm **leaving for** Paris tomorrow.
- We just **arrived from** New York.

#57 – Although / But

Don't say: “Although my teacher was good, but I failed the class.”

Say: “My teacher was good, but I failed the class.”

Or: “Although my teacher was good, I failed the class.”

Both **although** and **but** are prepositions of contrast. You can use one or the other, but not both in the same sentence.

#58 – Although / Though Even though

Don't say: "I like studying English. I get nervous when I speak, although."

Say: "I like studying English, although I get nervous when I speak."

Or: "I like studying English. I get nervous when I speak, though."

Although and **even though** are used at the beginning of a sentence or clause – never at the end of a sentence. **Though** is also used at the beginning of a sentence or clause, and it **can** be used at the end of a sentence.

#59 – Possibility / Opportunity

Don't say: "I have the possibility to travel to London next month."

Say: "I have the opportunity to travel to London next month."

With the verb **have**, always use **opportunity**. The word **possibility** is more often used with "there is":

- There's a possibility I might travel to London next month.

Also, **possibility** is neutral – it means maybe the event will happen, and maybe it will not happen. The word **opportunity** is a little more positive, it expresses the possibility for something good. So we can use **possibility** with good or bad things, but **opportunity** is usually used only for good things:

- I'm worried about the **possibility** of losing my job.
- Studying abroad is a great **opportunity** to see the world while learning a language.

#60 – Success / Succeed / Successful

Don't say: “The project was success.”

Say: “The project was a success.”

Or: “The project was successful.”

It's important to know the difference between nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs in English. **Success** is the noun, **succeed** is the verb, **successful** is the adjective, and **successfully** is the adverb.

#61 – Promise

Don't say: “I promise I call you later.”

Say: “I promise I'll call you later.”

Or: “I promise to call you later.”

After “promise,” use the future with **will**, or **to + verb**. (After “promised,” use “would”)

- He **promises** he'll arrive on time.
- I lent Jackie some money, and she **promised** she'd pay me back by Friday.
- They **promised** me they **wouldn't** tell anyone my secret.

#62 – Big / Great

Don't say: “I have big respect for my parents.”

Say: “I have great respect for my parents.”

In general, use **big** for **physical size**: a big suitcase, a big nose, big glasses.

Big can also be used for **extent**: a big project, big plans, a big difference

Great is used for **quality** (like “good”): a great idea, great food, great trip

Use **great** with **abstract concepts**: great respect, great love, great joy, great sadness

#63 – Big / Large

Don't say: “I'll have a big coffee with milk.”

Say: “I'll have a large coffee with milk.”

With **food, drink, and clothing sizes**, we use **large**, not big:

- I'd like to exchange this T-shirt – it's too small. It's a size medium, and I need a **large**.
- Could you bring me a **large** soda?
- I'd like a **large** Greek salad.

#64 – Good evening / Good night

Don't say: “Good evening, Martha. See you tomorrow.”

Say: “Good night, Martha. See you tomorrow.”

Say “**Good evening**” to say “**hello**” after 6:00 PM. “Good evening” is commonly used at restaurants, in a professional context, and in speeches (when you speak in front of a large number of people):

- “Good evening, do you have a reservation?” (at a restaurant)
- “Good evening, Tom. How are you?” (to a colleague)
- “Good evening, ladies and gentlemen...” (in a speech)

In general, “good evening” is a little more formal. Friends don't normally say “good evening” to each other – they would say “Hi” or “What's up?” or another informal greeting.

Say “**Good night**” to say “**goodbye**” – when you are leaving to go home. Family members also say “good night” when they are going to bed.

- “Good night, Janet. See you tomorrow.”
- “Good night, mom. I’m going to bed.”

#65 – Should / Could / Would

Don’t say: “If I were you, I should go to the doctor.”

Say: “If I were you, I would go to the doctor.”

Or: “You should go to the doctor.”

In general, should and shouldn’t are used to give advice:

- You should get more exercise.
- He shouldn’t spend so much time on the computer.
- We should stop smoking.
- They shouldn’t wear shorts to work.

However, in the structure “**If I were you...**” we use **would** (or ‘d)

- If I were you, I would get more exercise.
- If I were him, I wouldn’t spend so much time on the computer.
- If I were her, I’d stop smoking.

Could is used in three cases:

1. Ability in the past
“When I as a child, I **could** play soccer really well.”
2. Possibilities in the future
“How can we publicize our new product?”
“We **could** try an online advertising campaign.”
3. Polite requests
“**Could** you please open the window? It’s hot in here.”

#66 – Most / Most of

Don't say: “Most of women like chocolate.”

Say: “Most women like chocolate.”

If you are talking about a large, general group, use **most**. If you are talking about a specific group, use **most of**:

- Most students study hard. (general group)
- Most of the students in this class study hard. (specific group)
- I like most American movies. (general group)
- I don't like most of the movies directed by Quentin Tarantino (specific group)
- I'm allergic to most perfumes. (general group)
- Most of the perfumes in this store are expensive. (specific group)

#67 – Some / Any

Don't say: “I don't have some money.”

Say: “I don't have any money.”

“Some” is used in **positive statements**. “Any” is used in **negative statements** and **questions**:

- Positive: I want **some** bread.
- Negative: I don't want **any** bread.
- Question: Do we have **any** bread in the house?

We can only use **some** in negative statements and questions when **offering** or **asking for something**:

- Would you like some bread? (offering something)
- Can I have some ketchup for my fries, please? (asking for something)

#68 – Too / Too much / Too many

Don't say: “That computer is too much expensive.”

Say: “That computer is too expensive.”

Use **too** before **adjectives**:

- This book is too difficult for me.
- I can't lift this suitcase. It's too heavy.

Use **too much** before **uncountable nouns**:

- You put **too much butter** in this cake.
- I have **too much homework** – I can't finish it all!

Use **too many** before **countable nouns**:

- I have **too many things** to do.
- There are **too many people** in this bar.

#69 – Die / Died / Dead

Don't say: “My grandfather dead five years ago.”

Say: “My grandfather died five years ago.”

Die is the verb in the present, and **died** is the verb in the past. **Dead** is the adjective, so we often use it with the verb “to be,” or before a noun:

- He died in 1972. He **has been dead** for over 30 years.
- The victim **was dead** by the time the ambulance arrived.
- I found a **dead rat** under my bed.
- Police discovered a **dead body** in the basement of the old building.

#70 – Good at / Good with

Don't say: “I'm good in math.”

Say: “I'm good at math.”

To talk about ability for subjects and actions, we use **good at** and **bad at** (with the **-ing** form if talking about an action):

- I'm good at skiing.
- I'm bad at snowboarding.
- He's good at history.
- He's bad at biology.

To talk about ability to have good relationships with **people**, **children**, and **animals**, we use **good with** and **bad with**:

- She's an excellent salesperson – she's very **good with** people.
- He's **great with** children – he has 6 kids of his own.
- I wanted to be a veterinarian because I've always been **good with** animals.

#71 – Of / From

Don't say: “This wine is of Italy.”

Say: “This wine is from Italy.”

Of and **from** are frequently confused by English learners, but there is an easy difference:

OF is used for **POSSESSION** – Who does it belong to?

- A friend of mine (=my friend)
- The president of the company (=the company's president)
- The color of that car (=that car's color)

FROM is used for **ORIGIN** – Where did it come from?

- I'm from the United States.
- This T-shirt is from Mexico.
- I got this book from the bookstore. (It is now MY book, but its origin was the bookstore).

#72 – Time

Don't say: "It's seven-fifteen o'clock."

Say: "It's seven-fifteen."

Don't say: "It's seven and a half."

Say: "It's seven-thirty."

Or: "It's half past seven."

O'clock is only used with times that are exactly on the hour: 7:00, 11:00, 3:00, etc.

We can say **half past seven** to mean 7:30, but not "seven and a half."

#73 – Little / Small

Don't say: "I have a small experience in marketing."

Say: "I have a little experience in marketing."

Small is only used for **physical size** (a big apartment / a small apartment).

Little can be used for:

- **amount** (I'm very afraid / I'm a little afraid)
- **size** with an emotional expression. This emotional expression can be:
 - **Adoration:** Look at that cute little dog!
 - **Sympathy:** That poor little girl has no mother or father.
 - **Dislike:** I don't want to go to her stupid little party.

There's also a difference between "little" and "a little":

- I have **a little** experience = Positive connotation. I have some experience.
- I have **little** experience = Negative connotation. I have almost no experience.

#74 – I / me

Don't say: "Dan and me went to the beach."

Say: "Dan and I went to the beach."

Don't say: "My mom gave presents to my brother and I."

Say: "My mom gave presents to my brother and me."

The difference between "I" and "me" is the difference between a **subject** and an **object**.

A **subject** is the person that **does the action** in the sentence. Subjects in English are:

- I, you, he, she, we, they

An **object** is the person that **receives the action** in the sentence. Objects in English are:

- Me, you, him, her, us, them

Here's another example:

- **They** bought my car. (they = subject that performs the action)
- I sold my car to **them**. (them = object that receives the action)

#75 – Seven / Seventh

Don't say: "I came in seven place in the competition."

Say: "I came in seventh place in the competition."

We use **regular numbers** to talk about **quantity** – how many of something there is:

- There are eleven people on our soccer team.

We use **ordinal numbers** to talk about **position** in a list:

- Our team was the eleventh best in the state!

We also use ordinal numbers when **speaking about a date**:

- His birthday is on October **twenty-fourth**.
- My daughter was born on June **second**.
- The conference begins on the **fifth** of January.

Ordinal numbers in English:

- First = 1st
- Second = 2nd
- Third = 3rd
- Fourth = 4th
- Fifth = 5th
- Sixth = 6th
- Seventh = 7th
- Eighth = 8th
- Ninth = 9th
- Tenth = 10th

Large numbers can also be ordinal:

- Hundredth = 100th
- Thousandth = 1000th
- Two-hundred and thirty-seventh = 237th

#76 – Advice / Advise

Don't say: "I advice you to see a doctor."

Say: "I advise you to see a doctor."

Advice is a noun:

- He gave me good advice about the situation.
- Can you give me some advice?
- I'd like to ask your advice about a problem.

Remember that **advice** is **uncountable**, so we can say "some advice," "a lot of advice," or "a little advice" – but NOT "an advice," "some advices," or "many advices."

Advise is a verb:

- My father advised me not to talk to strangers.
- I wouldn't advise working and studying full-time – it's too stressful.
- Jill advised me to do more research before making a decision.

#77 – How/ What... like?

Don't say: "How is the weather like in your country?"

Say: "What is the weather like in your country?"

Or: "How is the weather in your country?"

You can say either **How is...?** or **What is... like?** – but don't mix them!

#78 – Will / Would

Don't say: "I will like to have a beer right now."

Say: "I would like to have a beer right now."

"I **would like**" is a polite way to **express a desire**. It is similar to "I **want**" but more indirect.

"I **will like**" is not commonly used, but it is a way to **predict enjoyment**. For example:

- I think **I'll like** the new movie. The trailer looks really interesting!

#79 – Near / Close

Don't say: “My house is near to the beach.”

Say: “My house is near the beach.”

Or: “My house is close to the beach.”

Near and **close to** are the same – but don't mix them and say “near to”!

#80 – As far as / As long as

Don't say: “As long as I know, Dana is single.”

Say: “As far as I know, Dana is single.”

Use “**as long as**” for:

- **Time**
“I'll stay with you as long as you want.”
- **Requirement**
“You can go to the party as long as you're back by 11 PM.”

Use “**as far as**” for:

- **Degree or distance**
“I'll walk with you as far as the corner.”
- **Opinion** (in the expression “as far as I'm concerned”)
“As far as I'm concerned, he owes me an apology.”
- **To limit your statement**
“As far as I know, Barry has never been outside the country.”
“As far as I can remember, Emily's the only person I've met who doesn't like pizza.”

#81 – Pick up

Don't say: “My sister’s flight gets in at 3, and I need to pick up her from the airport.”

Say: “My sister’s flight gets in at 3, and I need to pick her up from the airport.”

Phrasal verbs can be “separable” or “inseparable.” **Pick up** is a “separable” phrasal verb, which means that its object can be placed between the verb (“pick”) and the preposition (“up”). With separable phrasal verbs, there are three correct ways and one incorrect way to construct the phrase:

- I need to pick up Carla.
- I need to pick Carla up.
- I need to pick her up.
- ~~I need to pick up her.~~

When the object of the phrasal verb is a **pronoun** (him, her, me, you, us, them, or it), it **MUST** go **in the middle of the phrasal verb**. Here’s another example:

- Turn off the TV.
- Turn the TV off.
- Turn it off.
- ~~Turn off it.~~

#82 – Can / Able to

Don't say: “After two more years of study, I will can speak English fluently.”

Say: “After two more years of study, I will be able to speak English fluently.”

Here is a table showing **can / can't** in the past, present, and future:

Past	Present	Future
could / couldn't was / were able to	can / can't am / is / are able to	will / won't be able to

In the present and past, there are two forms – but in the future, the only option is **will/won't be able to**.

- When I was a child, **I could run** a mile in seven minutes
- Now I'm out of shape. **I can run** a mile in about twelve minutes.
- After starting an exercise program, **I'll be able to run** a mile in ten minutes.

#83 – Silent / Quiet

Don't say: “She's very silent.”

Say: “She's very quiet.”

Quiet means “very little noise,” and **silent** means “no noise.” When describing someone's personality, use “quiet.” Also, a person can “talk quietly” (speaking in a low voice, not very loud) but not “talk silently” (this is impossible!)

#84 – Beside / Besides

Don't say: “Chris sat down besides Paul.”

Say: “Chris sat down beside Paul.”

Or: “Chris sat down next to Paul.”

Beside is a preposition of **location** – it means “next to” or “on the side of”

- There's a printer beside the computer.
- "Where are the scissors?"
"Over there – beside the markers."

Besides is an adverb that means "in addition to":

- Besides being expensive, that car is ugly.

Besides can also be a preposition that means "except for":

- Jenny has no friends besides her sister. (= Jenny's sister is her only friend)

#85 – Past / Past participle

Don't say: "I've never spoke English on the phone."

Say: "I've never spoken English on the phone."

The **present perfect**, **past perfect**, and **future perfect** tenses are formed with the past participle:

- **Present perfect:** have/has + past participle
- **Past perfect:** had + past participle
- **Future perfect:** will have + past participle

For many verbs, the **past participle** is the same as the **simple past** form:

- "I've **worked** here for three years."
- "I **worked** late yesterday."
- "We haven't **sold** our house yet."
- "We **sold** our car last month."

However, for some verbs, the **past participle** is different from the **simple past**.

Here are a few examples:

Present	Simple Past	Past Participle
Speak	Spoke	Spoken
Take	Took	Taken
Eat	Ate	Eaten

Begin	Began	Begun
Drink	Drank	Drunk
Sing	Sang	Sung
Become	Became	Become

Click here for more tips for learning irregular verbs:

<http://www.espressoenglish.net/tips-for-learning-irregular-verbs-in-english/>

#86 – Thank you for

Don't say: “Thank you for help me.”

Say: “Thank you for helping me.”

After prepositions, use the **–ing form** of the verb:

- I'm sorry **about losing** my temper.
- He went to the bar instead **of going** home.
- She's interested **in trying** a dance class.

#87 – Thankfully / Hopefully

Don't say: “Hopefully, we didn't have to wait long for an appointment.”

Say: “Thankfully, we didn't have to wait long for an appointment.”

You can say **hopefully** about something you want to happen (but you do not know if it will happen or not). Say **thankfully** about an established fact.

Both “hopefully” and “thankfully” can be used in the past, present, or future – but thankfully is about confirmed facts and hopefully is about unconfirmed facts:

Future:

- **Hopefully**, this project will be finished by the end of the month.
(= I'm not sure if it will be finished by the end of the month or not, but I want it to)
- **Thankfully**, this project will be finished by the end of the month.
(= This project will *definitely* be finished by that time)

Present:

- **Hopefully**, there isn't a long line at the bank.
(= I'm not yet at the bank, so I don't know if the line is long or not)
- **Thankfully**, there isn't a long line at the bank.
(= I'm at the bank now, and I can see that the line is not long)

Past:

- **Hopefully**, George got home safely last night.
(= I don't know if he got home safely or not)
- **Thankfully**, George got home safely last night.
(= I know for a fact that George is OK – perhaps he called me and confirmed it)

#88 – Let to go

Don't say: "I don't let my kids to watch violent movies."

Say: "I don't let my kids watch violent movies."

Or: "I don't allow my kids to watch violent movies."

Let and **allow** both mean "permit" – but "let" is not followed by "to." There are four verbs in the English language that are followed by an object + simple form of the verb (no "to"):

- **LET:** They *let* him go on the trip.
I *let* him borrow my book.
- **MAKE:** We *made* our children eat their broccoli.
I *made* my sister cry.

- **HELP:** She *helped* him finish his homework.
I *helped* Peter and Janet find the pharmacy.
- **HAVE:** The teacher *had* us do presentations in class.
I *had* my brother fix the computer.

#89 – That he wanted it

Don't say: “Ryan saw the toy that he wanted it.”

Say: “Ryan saw the toy that he wanted.”

When you use a dependent clause, you don't need to repeat the object or person that the clause modifies:

- ~~That's the teacher who I don't like her.~~
That's the teacher who I don't like.
- ~~I still live in the house where I grew up there.~~
I still live in the house where I grew up.
- ~~The books that I borrowed them are in my backpack.~~
The books that I borrowed are in my backpack.

#90 – too / very

Don't say: “I'm too happy about this opportunity.”

Say: “I'm very happy about this opportunity.”

Very and **too** have different meanings. Consider this example:

- I have \$100.
- This bottle of wine costs \$90. It's very expensive, but I can buy it.
- That bottle of wine costs \$150. It's too expensive, so I can't buy it.

“Very” in front of an adjective amplifies it. To amplify something even more than “very,” you can say “extremely”:

- It's 75°F. **It's hot.**
- It's 90°F. **It's very hot.**
- It's 105°F. **It's extremely hot.**

"Too" means "more than the limit." For example:

- You must be 17 years old to watch this movie. Jackson is 14. **He's too young.**
- This shirt is a size large, and I need a size small. The shirt is **too big** for me.
- The train left at 8:00 and we got to the station at 8:30. We arrived **too late.**

Because there is no "limit" to happiness in the sentence, we use "very" and not "too."

#91 – Female / Woman

Don't say: "She is the country's first woman president."

Say: "She is the country's first female president."

Female is an **adjective**, and **woman** is a **noun**. In this sentence, the word "president" is described by the adjectives "first" and "female" – so we must use "female" and not "woman." We could change the sentence to use "woman" instead, as the subject of the sentence:

- A woman is president for the first time in the country's history.

There is a similar rule with **male** (adjective) and **man** (noun).

It is possible to use "female" and "male" as nouns, but this is usually only done when talking about animals or when writing scientific papers where humans are part of the experiment.

#92 – Raise / rise / arise

Don't say: "The government is going to rise taxes."

Say: "The government is going to raise taxes."

Rise means "to go up" or "to increase" – by itself. There is only a subject; there is no object.

- The sun **rises** at 6:00 AM.
- Energy consumption **rose** 20% this year.

Raise means “to move something to a higher position” or “to increase something,” so there are two entities, the subject (which performs the action) and the object (the thing that is moved or increased):

- I **raised my hand** to answer the teacher’s question.
(subject = I; object = my hand)
- The state is **raising the minimum age** to get a driver’s license – from 16 to 18.
(subject = the state; object = the minimum age to get a driver’s license)

Raise can also be used in a more metaphorical sense:

- He **raised some objections** to the project proposal.
(= he expressed the objections)
- Our baseball team **raised money** for a local orphanage.
(= collected money from donations)
- My parents **raised their voices** during the argument.
(= spoke louder)
- The college is **raising the bar** for new applicants.
(= increasing the standards)

Arise is similar to rise, but is more formal and abstract. It can also be used to mean “appear” or “result from”:

- Several important questions **arose** during the meeting.
- I’d like to work in Japan, if the opportunity **arises**.
- A new spirit of hope has **arisen** among the country’s people.
- Sorry, I’ll need to cancel our appointment. A few problems have arisen.

#93 – Each of / All of

Don’t say: “Each of the students have a computer.”

Say: “Each of the students has a computer.”

Or: “All of the students have computers.”

Although “students” is plural, “each” is singular – we are considering each student separately – so sentences with “each of” take the singular form of the verb:

- **Each of** these postcards **is** from a different country.
- **Each of** the pieces of furniture in the store **is** hand-crafted.

Sentences with “all of” use the singular form of the verb if the noun is uncountable, and the plural form of the verb if the noun is countable and plural:

- All of the beer **is** imported.
- All of the bottles **are** recyclable.

In general, we use “**each of**” when we want to emphasize the individuality of the objects, as in the case of the postcards from different countries. We use “**all of**” when we want to talk about the objects as a group.

#94 – Made of / Made from

Don't say: “These plates are made from plastic.”

Say: “These plates are made of plastic.”

Use “**made of**” to talk about the material of an object – wood, plastic, glass, crystal, etc. – which has not gone through very much processing. You can still see the original material.

Use “**made from**” to talk about one object that came from another, different object:

- This purse is made from recycled plastic bags.
- Cheese is made from milk.
- Wine is made from grapes.

In each of these cases, you can't see the original materials anymore (plastic bags, milk, or grapes) anymore; they have been transformed into a new object.

#95 – Both / Both of

Don't say: “Both of Tom and Brian are American.”

Say: “Both Tom and Brian are American.”

Use “both of” + plural noun:

- Both of **my brothers** are engineers.
- Both of **these televisions** are broken.
- I read both of **the books** the teacher lent me.

Use “both” + two individual items:

- Both **Ron** and **his son** are very tall.
- I enjoyed both **the book** and **the movie**.
- We bought both **the necklace** and **the bracelet** in Milan.

#96 – Simple Past Negative

Don't say: “I no went to the party.”

Don't say: “I not went to the party.”

Don't say: “I didn't went to the party.”

Say: “I didn't go to the party.”

Remember that the simple past negative is formed by the **auxiliary verb** “didn't” + the simple form of the verb (“go”):

- I **liked** the movie.
My brother **didn't like** the movie.
- We **ate** at a restaurant.
We **didn't eat** at home.

- They **had** a baby boy.
They **didn't have** a baby girl.

#97 – Hundred / Hundreds

Don't say: "This castle was built five hundreds of years ago."

Say: "This castle was built five hundred years ago."

Or: "This castle was built hundreds of years ago."

For **hundred / hundreds**, we use "hundred" when there is a number in front of it – one hundred, two hundred, three hundred, etc. We use "hundreds" when you don't count how many. This rule also applies to **thousand/thousands** and **million/millions**.

- This skeleton is **thousands of years** old.
- This skeleton is **three thousand years** old.

When talking about numbers, always use the singular form:

- 250 = Two hundred and fifty
~~Two hundreds and fifty~~
- 7,812 = Seven thousand, eight hundred and twelve
~~Seven thousands, eight hundreds and twelve~~
- \$10,000,000 = Ten million dollars
~~Ten millions dollars~~

#98 – Gerund as subject

Don't say: "Live in an English-speaking country is the fastest way to improve."

Say: "Living in an English-speaking country is the fastest way to improve."

When you want to use a verb as the subject of a sentence, always use the **gerund (-ing form)**. This form of the verb functions as a noun.

#99 – By / until

Don't say: “I need to finish the project until Friday.”

Say: “I need to finish the project by Friday.”

When using **by** or **until** with a time in the future, **by** is used for one specific event, and **until** is used for a continuous event. “Finishing the project” is a single moment in time (one specific event) so we use **by Friday** in this case.

Here's an example with **until**: “Can I stay at your house **until Friday?**” In this case, the action of “staying at your house” is a **continuous action** that covers ALL the time from now to Friday.

#100 – Assure / Ensure / Insure

Don't say: “She ensured me that she'd send me the information as soon as possible.”

Say: “She assured me that she'd send me the information as soon as possible.”

Assure means to tell another person something to remove doubt or anxiety.

- I was afraid we'd miss the flight, but my husband **assured** me we'd get to the airport in time.

Ensure is something you do to guarantee a specific result.

- We ordered 10 pizzas to ensure that there would be enough food for everybody.

Insure is when you get a financial plan to pay for any damage or loss to a person or thing. This is related to the word “insurance,” such as health insurance, car insurance, etc.

- Our house is insured against fires, floods, and theft.

Thank you for reading 100 Common Errors in English!

I have a special surprise for you:
12 more bonus errors on the next pages.
Enjoy! 😊

#101 – Less / Least / More / Most

Don't say: “He’s the less popular teacher in the school.”

Say: “He’s the least popular teacher in the school.”

More and **less** are comparatives – use them to compare two things:

- Nina is **more dedicated than** George.
- George is **less dedicated than** Nina.

Most and **least** are superlatives – use them to compare three or more things:

- Nina is **the most dedicated** student in the class.
- George is **the least dedicated** student in the class.

#102 – Number / Amount

Don't say: “The amount of children who are overweight is increasing.”

Say: “The number of children who are overweight is increasing.”

Use **amount** with uncountable nouns:

- This recipe requires a small **amount of wine**.
- She inherited a large **amount of money** from her grandfather.

Use **number** with countable nouns:

- A **number of my friends** are teachers.
- A large **number of people** complained about the restaurant's terrible service.

#103 – Specially / Especially

Don't say: “This program is especially designed for business English students.”

Say: “This program is specially designed for business English students.”

Specially means “for a particular purpose.”

- I made this cake specially for you, because it's your birthday!

Especially means “exceptionally.”

- All the food at the restaurant was good, but the baked salmon was especially delicious.
(= the salmon is even better than the food in general)

#104 – Adjective order

Don't say: “The house has an old beautiful stone grey wall.”

Say: “The house has a beautiful old grey stone wall.”

When there are **multiple adjectives** describing a noun, there is an order for the adjectives that sounds good and natural:

1. **Article or other noun signal word** (a, an, the, most)
2. **Opinion** (wonderful, unfair, useful, ugly)
3. **Size** (large, tiny, little)
4. **Shape** (round, long, bell-shaped)
5. **Age** (old, teenaged, modern)
6. **Color** (green, yellow, black)
7. **Nationality** (Vietnamese, Dominican, Russian)
8. **Material** (stone, wood, cotton)

#105 – Haven't / don't have

Don't say: “I haven't a car.”

Say: “I don't have a car.”

The verb **have** is used in various situations in English. When “have” is used for possession, the correct negative form is “don't have.” In British English, you can also say “haven't got” – “I haven't got a car.”

You can use “haven't” in **present perfect negative** sentences:

- I haven't seen my cousin for about two years – she lives in another country.
- Unfortunately, we haven't had any time to travel this year. We've been too busy.

#106 – Hair / Hairs

Don't say: “My girlfriend is washing her hairs.”

Say: “My girlfriend is washing her hair.”

When talking about the **hair** on someone's head, “hair” is an uncountable noun. It's possible to say “hairs” if talking about individual strands of hair:

- I'm never going back to that restaurant! The last time I was there, I found two hairs in my salad!

#107 – Twice more expensive

Don't say: “Singing lessons are twice more expensive than dancing lessons.”

Say: “Singing lessons are twice as expensive as dancing lessons.”

If you are comparing two things in general, you can use the structure: **more (adjective) than**:

- Singing lessons are more expensive than dancing lessons.

However, if you are quantifying the comparison with **twice**, use the structure **as (adjective) as**.

With quantified comparisons of three times, four times, etc. the most grammatically correct structure is **as (adjective) as**, but it's also common to use **more (adjective) than**:

- The beach house is **ten times more expensive than** the city apartment.
- The beach house is **ten times as expensive as** the city apartment.

#108 – Give (to)

Don't say: “Ben gave to Susan a diamond ring.”

Say: “Ben gave Susan a diamond ring.”

Or: “Ben gave a diamond ring to Susan.”

This sentence has both a **direct object** and an **indirect object**. The indirect object (“Susan”) is the person who receives something. The direct object (“a diamond ring”) is the object that is transferred from the subject (“Ben”) to the indirect object (“Susan”).

In sentences with both direct and indirect objects, there are two possible structures:

- **Structure 1:** Subject + Verb + Indirect Object + Direct Object
- **Structure 2:** Subject + Verb + Direct Object + To/For + Indirect Object

Here are more examples:

- **Structure 1**
The teacher told us a story.
Jan lent me a pencil.
- **Structure 2**
I sold my car to Jack.
Kevin bought a birthday present for his mother.

#109 – Two forms of “used to”

Don't say: “I'm used to play basketball, but not anymore.”

Say: “I used to play basketball, but not anymore.”

There are two forms of **used to** in English:

1. used to = accustomed to

The first meaning of used to is “accustomed to” – when something was strange or different for you in the past, but now you think it’s normal:

- We’re used to waking up early – we do it every day.
- After I moved from New York to London, it took me a long time to get used to driving on the right side of the road.

Before this form of “used to,” we use the verbs BE and GET – “be” to describe the state of being accustomed to something, and “get” to describe the process of becoming accustomed to something. After this form of “used to,” we use a noun or the **-ing form**.

2. used to / didn’t use to = something you did repeatedly in the past, but not now

The second meaning of used to is to describe actions you did repeatedly in the past, but that you don’t do now:

- He used to play tennis, but he stopped a few years ago.
- She didn’t use to like vegetables, but now she eats them frequently.

After this form of used to, we use the infinitive of the verb.

#110 – Second Conditional

Don’t say: “If I would study more, I would get better grades.”

Say: “If I studied more, I would get better grades.”

The **second conditional** is used to talk about “unreal” or imaginary situations.

There are two parts to a **second conditional** sentence: the **condition** and the **result**:

CONDITION (if + subject + past simple)	RESULT (subject + would/might/could + verb)
--	---

If he exercised more,	he'd be thinner.
If I were taller,	I could be a professional basketball player.
If the teacher spoke more slowly,	we'd understand her better.
If your company went bankrupt,	what would you do?

With **would**, it's common to use the contractions:

I'd, you'd, he'd, she'd, we'd, they'd

It is possible to reverse the condition and the result, with no change in meaning:

- **Condition + Result:** If you slept 8 hours every night, you'd feel better
- **Result + Condition:** You'd feel better if you slept 8 hours every night.

#111 – Stop to smoke / Stop smoking

Don't say: "I stopped smoke ten years ago."

Say: "I stopped smoking ten years ago."

Some verbs, like **stop**, **remember**, **forget**, and **regret** can be followed by either "to + verb" or the -ing form – but the meaning is different! In general, the "to" form refers to a future event, and the -ing form refers to a past event:

Remember:

- I **remember going** to my grandparents' house when I was a child.
- **Remember to go** to the bank tomorrow.

Stop:

- He **stopped eating** when the phone rang.
(eating = 1st action, stopped = 2nd action)
- He **stopped to eat** a snack because he was hungry.
(stopped = 1st action, eat = 2nd action)

Forget:

- I'll never **forget meeting** my husband for the first time.
- I **forgot to lock** the door.

Regret:

- I **regret losing** my temper with my neighbor.
(losing temper = 1st action, regret = 2nd action)
- We **regret to inform** you that your application has been rejected.
(regret = 1st action, inform = 2nd action)

#112 – I asked him...

Don't say: "I asked him where was the remote control."

Say: "I asked him where the remote control was."

In **reported questions** (when we are talking about a question that somebody asked in the past), we don't use the normal question structure of Question Word + Auxiliary Verb + Subject + Main Verb. Instead, we use the structure: Question Word + Subject + Main Verb:

- ~~I asked her where does she live.~~
I asked her where she lives.
- ~~He asked me what was I doing~~
He asked me what I was doing.
- ~~She asked them what did they think about the book.~~
She asked them what they thought about the book.

This structure (Question Word + Subject + Main Verb) is also used in indirect questions:

- **Direct question:** Where's the pharmacy?
Indirect question: Could you tell me where the pharmacy is?
~~Could you tell me where is the pharmacy?~~
- **Direct question:** What time does the train leave?
Indirect question: Do you know what time the train leaves?
~~Do you know what time does the train leave?~~

Thank you for reading!

Do you have any questions?

Please e-mail me at:

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For more English tips, visit:

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